

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified application is respectfully requested. Claims 1-19 and 23-27 are pending in the application. In a Final Office Action mailed on July 29, 2004, (hereinafter "Office Action") Claims 4-6 and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Claims 1-4 and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and Claims 5-9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Claims 10-19, 23, 24, 26, and 27 were indicated as allowed. Claim 1 has been amended and Claims 2 and 25 are canceled by way of this amendment and response.

35 U.S.C. § 112 Rejection of Claims 4-6 and 25

Claims 4-6 and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Applicant respectfully disagrees for at least the reasons following.

35 U.S.C. § 112 Rejection of Claim 4

The Office Action alleges that the limitation "the inlet and outlet end portions of the pipe section" recited in Claim 4 lacks antecedent basis. Applicant respectfully disagrees and points out that Claim 1, from which Claim 4 depends, recites "a pipe section having a center segment integrally formed with *inlet and outlet end portions of the pipe section*." [Emphasis added.] Therefore, applicant submits that Claim 1 provides proper antecedent basis for the limitation "the inlet and outlet end portions of the pipe section" in Claim 4. Accordingly, applicant requests that the 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, rejection of Claim 4 be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C. § 112 Rejection of Claim 5

Regarding Claim 5, applicant notes that no specific reason for the 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, rejection of Claim 5 has been set forth in the Office Action nor does

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applicant's review of Claim 5 reveal any reasons for such a rejection. Applicant respectfully requests that a specific reason be provided or that the 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, rejection of Claim 5 be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C. § 112 Rejection of Claim 6

The Office Action alleges that the limitation "the inlet end portion" from Claim 6 lacks antecedent basis. Applicant respectfully points out that Claim 1, from which Claim 6 depends, recites "a pipe section having a center segment integrally formed with *inlet and outlet end portions of the pipe section*." [Emphasis added.] Therefore, applicant submits that Claim 1 provides proper antecedent basis for the limitation "the inlet end portion" in Claim 6. Accordingly, applicant requests that the 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, rejection of Claim 6 be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C. § 112 Rejection of Claim 25

Claim 25 has been canceled by way of this amendment and response. Accordingly, applicant asserts that the 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, rejection of this claim is now moot.

35 U.S.C. § 102(b) Rejection of Claims 1, 3, and 4 in view of Kowalski

Claims 1, 3, and 4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,332,709, issued to Kowalski (hereinafter "Kowalski"). Applicant respectfully disagrees for at least the following reason. Applicant notes that Claim 1 has been amended to recite the same limitations cited as allowable over the prior art with regard to Claim 26. Therefore, applicant submits that Claim 1, and those claims which depend thereon, are also allowable over the prior art for at least the same reasons Claim 26 was found allowable. Applicant notes that the amendment to Claim 1 does not require further search since the added limitations are the same as those previously recited in, examined, and found allowable with regard to Claim 26.

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35 U.S.C. § 102(b) Rejection of Claims 1-4 and 25 in view of Cretzler

Claims 1-4 and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,393,103, issued to Cretzler (hereinafter "Cretzler"). Applicant respectfully disagrees for at least the following reason. Applicant notes that Claim 1 has been amended to recite the same limitations cited as allowable over the prior art with regard to Claim 26. Therefore, applicant submits that Claim 1, and those claims which depend thereon, are also allowable over the prior art for at least the same reasons Claim 26 was found allowable.

35 U.S.C. § 103(a) Rejection of Claims 5 and 6 in view of Kowalski and McLaughlin

Claims 5 and 6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kowalski in view of U.S. Patent No. 932,805 issued to McLaughlin (hereinafter "McLaughlin"). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of these claims. Applicant notes that Claim 1, from which Claims 5 and 6 depend, has been amended to recite the same limitations cited as allowable over the prior art with regard to Claim 26. Therefore, applicant submits that Claims 5 and 6, which depend from Claim 1, are also allowable over the prior art for at least the same reasons Claim 26 was found allowable.

35 U.S.C. § 103(a) Rejection of Claim 7 in view of Kowalski and Thweatt

Claim 7 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kowalski in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,724,478 issued to Thweatt (hereinafter "Thweatt"). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of Claim 7. Claim 7 depends from Claim 1. Applicant notes that Claim 1 has been amended to recite the same limitations cited as allowable over the prior art with regard to Claim 26. Therefore, applicant submits that Claim 7, which depends from Claim 1, is also allowable over the prior art for at least the same reasons Claim 26 was found allowable.

35 U.S.C. § 103(a) Rejection of Claims 8 and 9 in View of Kowalski and Luff

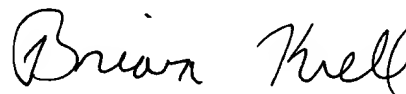
Claims 8 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kowalski in view of U.S. Patent No. 2,297,966 issued to Luff (hereinafter "Luff"). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of Claims 8 and 9. Claims 8 and 9 depend from Claim 1. Applicant notes that Claim 1 has been amended to recite the same limitations cited as allowable over the prior art with regard to Claim 26. Therefore, applicant submits that Claims 8 and 9, which depend from Claim 1, are also allowable over the prior art for at least the same reasons Claim 26 was found allowable.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks above, applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in condition for allowance. Consequently, early and favorable action allowing these claims and passing this application to issue is respectfully solicited. If any questions remain that may be expeditiously resolved by telephone, the Examiner is invited to contact the applicant's undersigned attorney at the number below.

Respectfully submitted,

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the U.S. Postal Service in a sealed envelope as first class mail with postage thereon fully prepaid and addressed to Mail Stop After Final, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on the below date.

Date:

October 20, 2004



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